

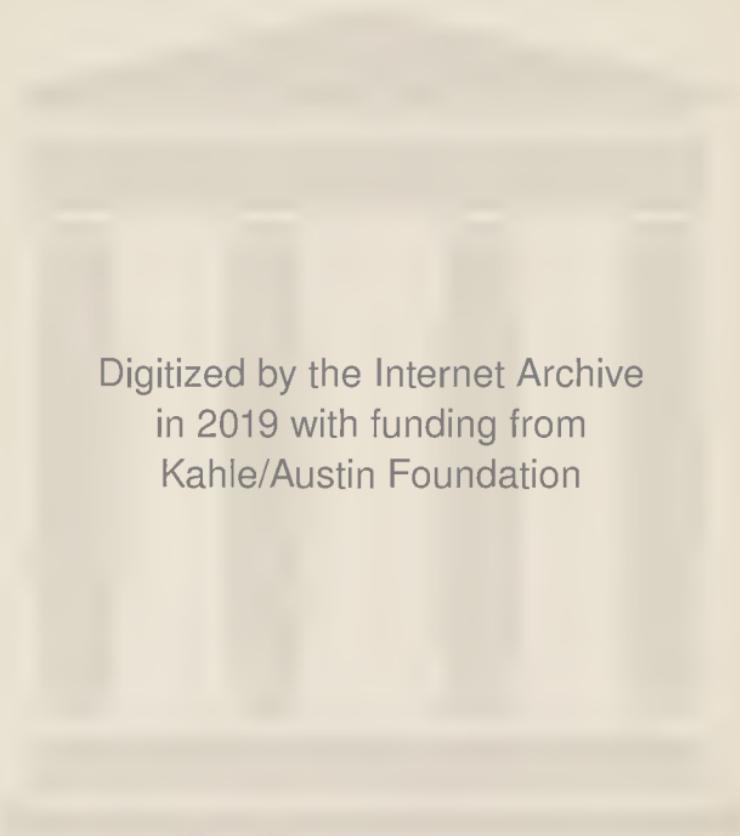
Albert Nauw

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Makers of Canadian Literature
ROBERT NORWOOD

----- Makers of -----
Canadian Literature

~Lorne Albert Pierce~
Editor

~Victor Morin~
Associate Editor
French Section

Dedicated to the writers of
Canada - past and present -
the real Master-builders and
Interpreters of our great
Dominion - in the hope that
our People, equal heirs in
the rich inheritance, may learn
to know them intimately; and
knowing them love them; and
loving follow

ROBERT NORWOOD

by

ALBERT DURRANT WATSON



TORONTO
THE RYERSON PRESS

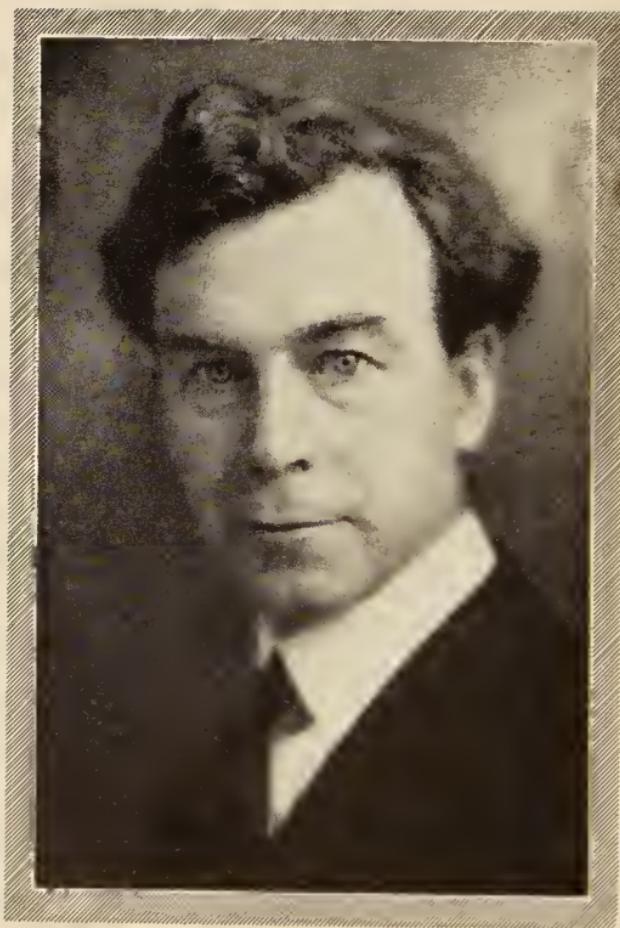
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Robert Norman

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HE backgrounds of genius are usually marked by golden half-hints of achievement outcropping in the ancestry. Out of such a background came Robert Norwood.

When a poet comes singing the word of life, the thing to be done is to listen; but when we have given ear, and his word has stirred us with its ringing inspirations, it is not in human nature to remain apathetic to the personality of the poet who has sung us into the border-lands of a new life. We want to know and to behold the man. We would trace his forces to their fountain-heads. We would know and understand how he came to be what he is. The biographical query is insistent, and the press never fails to publish every least item pertaining to a great man.

Let the total influence of heredity be much or little, we all know it has real significance; and no one denies the formative power of en-

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vironment, but the really thrilling interest is in the poet's reaction to these, for it is this reaction which reveals the man or the woman in question. True, he had ancestors and antecedents, but we want to know, not what they have made of him, but what he has made of them. What is his response to the challenge of experience? These are the white-hot queries with which a public, hungry for reality, is plying the biographer.

The poet has subtle antennæ which, trembling outward to the sea and upward to the mountains and the stars, catch new inspirations and discover new wonders, startling the soul and kindling it to the life undying. Because of these alert perceptions and susceptibilities the poet is, of all men, possessed of the fullest life. He reflects brilliantly from every facet of his nature the wonderful things his quickened vision perceives. Nothing can be hidden from his understanding soul.

In Robert Norwood we discern characteristics and idiosyncrasies which, if this were a study in genealogy, would be traced to the Norwoods or to the Clarks on one side of the house, or to the Hardings or the Crowells on the other. In the study of a poet and his songs,

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progenitors are merely the shadows on his soul's background, retained as shadows, even though, as in the case of Robert Norwood, they are of unusually romantic interest and of notable outline.

There is evidence, for instance, that Norwood's great-grandfather married a full cousin of Oliver Wendell Holmes, for Dr. Joseph Clark, the father of Robert's paternal grandmother, and rector of St. George's Parish School, Halifax, Nova Scotia, won as his bride, Miss Holmes, a cousin of the "Poet of the Breakfast Table." But the reader will not be disappointed if we do not stress such matters. Robert Norwood has sufficient genius in his own right.

We can see a prophecy of our poet's independence and sense of justice in the fact that his father, Joseph Norwood, when eight years of age, ran away from home because of unjust treatment in the Boston school to which he was sent. Stowing himself away in a ship—the *Race Horse*, commanded by Captain Searle—he was soon working his passage to the Mediterranean. He stayed with Captain Searle and the *Race Horse* till he was second mate at eighteen years of age.

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Coming home at this time, he learned that his brother had enlisted in the First Boston Brigade of Massachusetts. In a few hours Joseph also was a young soldier in McLellan's army. Later, under U. S. Grant's generalship, young Norwood became a warm friend of the famous soldier, Joe Hooker, and with him took part in many engagements. Wounded in the battle of Malvern Hill, Joseph Norwood was sent home with honourable mention. After some years spent in various occupations, including his preparation for the Church, he took orders and was sent as a missionary to the west coast of Africa.

On his return to America, he became the rector of Christ Church, New Ross, Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia. He had married Edith Harding, and here, on March 27, 1874, Robert Norwood was born. "New Ross is a little village in the heart of a forest. There are no noises from the outside world. A great hill—Porcupine Hill—figures conspicuously in the dreams of Mickey Maitland." Thus writes our poet of his birthplace, and of the little boy whom he is pleased to name in this playful and artistic way in a story which he intends soon to publish. Norwood derived the name "Mickey

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Maitland" from Lady Sarah Jane Maitland, one of those ancestors, so many of whom struggle towards the heights, yet fail to reach them ere the one genius, at the far, long last, arrives.

Robert Norwood, the child, was contemplative and sensitive. He disliked the horse-play of the boys of the village, and spent much time in his father's library, for he had learned to read almost as soon as he had learned to talk. His early days were subjective. He developed what has since been termed the ethics of the intellect. He read aloud in his childlike way, and began, even at this early age, to tell, to the younger members of the family, yarns which he spun out of materials already within his reach.

When Robert was five years of age the Norwoods moved to Seaforth, a fishing village in the county of Halifax, and not far from Margaret's Bay. Here he imbibed the atmosphere and colour for his dramatic poem, "Bill Boram." He was now able to interpret in terms of his own senses the dreams he had woven around all the wonderful things his father had told him of the sea—the sea with its thunder of song, its suggestion of far, mysteri-

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ous shores, its changeful moods, the mists and the stars, and, above all, the ships that sailed away—away into those unseen reaches around the headlands—all these and a thousand other impressions were kindling fires of imagination that roused his genius to creative action, and set the stage for a later and fuller expression of the truth and life that were in him so richly. What wonder that he afterwards became an orator, a dramatist and, above all, a poet!

From Seaforth, the Norwoods moved to Calais in Maine. Robert was here a pupil in a great public school, but his stay was brief. His father was always looking for some intangible “garden behind the moon,” some Dream-Arden never yet discovered. He moved next to Oak Hill in the State of New York. Oak Hill is situated at the foot of the Catskills. Here was Mount Pisgah, a silent and faithful sentinel. For years the first morning outlook of the boy was upon the majesty of Pisgah’s purple crown. Often he stood enraptured, gazing long on that ever-changing splendour. It seemed to him that the Great Spirit communed with him here, and his soul was enlarged to a wholesome serenity by Pisgah’s panoramic beauty. It was to him an ade-

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quate expression of the glory of eternity. This mountain, like the sea, was the portal to a wonderland, and as he stood rooted in ecstasy of vision, he found himself upborne to a fairer world beyond the pillars of the dawn.

Again the striking of tents, and the boy was living on Grindstone, one of the Magdalen Islands in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Thus from hill to coast, and again from the mountains to the sea, was the boy oscillating like a pendulum of the sun. The school here was so indifferent that Robert was placed under the tuition of his mother. He acknowledges also, at this time, a debt of gratitude to his sister Florence, two years his senior, whose mental qualities provided a strong foundation for mutual sympathy and communion. His younger sister Nellie too had literary leanings, and Robert has often claimed that these sisters had more potential genius than himself. They may have lacked the Harding quality, the habit of patient devotion to work without immediate incentive. Robert began now to write in competition with his sister Florence, preferring poetry, especially the lyrical form.

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Once more a Norwood migration, this time to Shigawake, Quebec, on the Bay Chaleur. In the following year Robert, now aged thirteen, was sent to Coaticook Academy, where for the first time he came under the true discipline of learning. Wide reading had filled his mind with the English classics, but he had no ordered system of knowledge. He was devoid of mathematics, and his classical achievement was based upon his effort in the Magdalen Islands, where he had found an interlinear translation of Ovid's "Metamorphosis." Through his fascination for this work he had gradually come into some knowledge of Latin grammar and soon learned to do some translation himself.

His year at Coaticook Academy was unsatisfactory. He found himself hopelessly outdone by pupils with longer discipline, and soon began to feel discouraged, thinking himself dull. This conviction was strengthened by the principal, who told him he was "hopeless in mathematics and dull to the point of stupidity." His next year was spent at Lennoxville. Here he had the good fortune to have a brilliant teacher in mathematics, who appealed to his imagination and thus brought to him

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interest and success. Robert Norwood has often said: "The secret of genius is interest. All are potential geniuses."

At seventeen, Robert had been but one year at Coaticook and one at Lennoxville, and was not quite ready for the university. His father, in 1891, had moved to Hubbard's Cove, in Halifax County, not far from Robert's birthplace. Here our poet spent the winter in the quiet old rectory which was to be his father's last earthly home. Joseph Norwood's body lies here, with those of his sons Ted and Joe, in the shadow of St. Luke's. At the time of Joe's death in November, 1920, Norwood wrote: "Death is the Great Discoverer, for he discovers the hidden beauty of our loved ones in such overwhelming splendour that one is almost blinded thereby."

During the winter Robert read with unprecedented industry, and in the following year entered King's College, Windsor. While on the Magdalen Islands he had determined to be a clergyman. He had displayed much mechanical ingenuity in carving boats, and taking apart and reassembling clocks, so that he and his brother Ted had become quite wealthy in the eyes of the Grindstone Island boys, to

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whom they sold their wares. Robert's boats were in great demand. The boys owned a flotilla of these, which were propelled by mill-wheels in the stream flowing through the rectory garden. Joseph Norwood had determined, in view of these mechanical exploits, that Robert should be a marine engineer.

One day the boy tapped on the door of the study, entered, looked his father steadily in the eyes and said: "I have made up my mind to be a clergyman." He could not then bring himself to tell even his father of that sacred baptism of his inner being which had led him to make this decision; so his father was mystified.

Robert was passionately fond of his father, and waited upon him at every turn. Among other services, he was accustomed to carry the vestments from the rectory to the church and back again, a distance of about two miles. He usually took a short cut home through the woods. One afternoon—it was a beautiful Sunday in May—as he went whistling through the woods, he came into a clearing. The trees were throbbing with the songs of birds and rustling in the wind. The sunshine was pouring down into a dell starred with ar-

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butus, the perfume of which set the boy almost aflame with ecstasy. He was lost in an exaltation of spirit. Veils were lifted and for the first time he entered into the realization of "the beauty of holiness and the holiness of beauty." His knees trembled under him and he found himself kneeling and praying in a passion of tears. It seemed to him that the arms of God enfolded and claimed him. He realized his destiny in that hour, and never wavered in his determination to qualify for the priesthood in the Church of England.

At the end of his first university year, he was compelled by lack of funds to become a lay-reader in association with Mr. Clark, rector of the parish of Jeddore and Ship Harbour. Here he often walked thirty miles to and from his appointments. Before the end of the year the rooms were crowded in which he preached.

When he returned to King's, Charles G. D. Roberts, then a professor in the college, having seen one of Norwood's poems in print, assured him that he had the gift of song. "Do not misunderstand me," continued the professor, "the poem is far from perfect. It is full of faults, but it has undoubted quality which shows you are one of us." In appreciation of Norwood's

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gift he offered him the freedom of his home. The result was that every spare evening was spent in the professor's library. Norwood kept aloof from Windsor society for two reasons. He was not financially able to dress appropriately for social functions, and, besides, he desired to read so as to perfect himself in *belles-lettres*.

In his university career Norwood always felt the handicap of insufficient preparation. He entered King's with an exceptional class, and his effort to keep pace with them was terrific, but unavailing. His classmates never realized his native powers, and some of them have since wondered at his fame. In one field, however, he leapt into sudden success. He was known at once as a brilliant and effective speaker. He had developed this faculty somewhat in assisting his father, but no doubt it was a natural gift brought to perfection through use.

It is interesting to note that Theodore Seth Harding, one of his maternal forbears, was regarded in his time as the most eloquent preacher in Nova Scotia. In a pamphlet entitled, "The Harding Genealogy," some fifteen Theodore Hardings are mentioned as ances-

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tors of Norwood's mother, Edith Harding. There appears to be, in this fact, almost a presumption that Rev. Theodore Harding Rand was a member of the same clan, but I am able to state, on the authority of Miss Annie Campbell Huestis, the well-known Canadian poet ; of Rev. Douglas Hemmeon; and of relatives of Dr. Rand, that this poet was "named for" Rev. Theodore Seth Harding, though not related to him.

Graduated in 1897, Norwood returned to Hubbard's, where, through the lovely summer days, he read for orders. Ordained in Halifax in 1898, he took charge of St. Andrew's Mission at Neil's Harbour, Cape Breton. His name became a household word along the north shore of that island. Many stories are told of how he handled the village fights, and one especially of how he barred the entry of a cart-load of rum by chasing the bootleggers down the road and across the fields into a barn. A tea-meeting was on for that evening in the mission, and Norwood knew how the festivities would be marred if the rum were released. Through the closed door he assailed the bootleggers with vital English, exacting promises before he felt it safe for either them or their

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rum to be at large. So there was no drunkenness *en masse* until the tea-meeting was over. By a rugged, honest service to the people of the Harbour, Norwood held the respect and won the affection of his parish.

While at this mission, he married Ethel, daughter of Dr. George McKeen, of Baddeck. Joseph Norwood's health was failing, and Bishop Courtney called upon the young priest to take over the parish work at Hubbard's. So Norwood went back where he had first tried his flight in song. From a blank note book many lines written in an angular hand indicate the nature of Norwood's art. Some of these appear in "Driftwood," a small collection of verse by himself and Charles Vernon, his brilliant room-mate at King's, published privately shortly after Norwood's graduation.

One daughter, Aileen, was born to the Norwoods while they were at Hubbard's. Ted and Jean are younger, and the three with their parents make up the Norwood family. Shortly after the birth of Aileen, Norwood was called to Trinity Church, Bridgewater, N.S. Here he spent five happy years. Among the many friendships of this time, he often refers to those of Dr. Hemmeon, Mr. Roberts, a lawyer,

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Mr. Paton, W. E. Marshall, the Canadian poet and author of "Brookfield," and C. W. Thompson, a blacksmith, whom Norwood still regards as one of the finest minds he has ever known. "These men," he declares, "curried and combed me;" and he had the good sense to value the service.

Norwood never ceased to be a thorough student. He left Bridgewater to take courses in Philosophy and History in Columbia University, after which he took charge of the parish of All Saints at Springhill. Here he became familiar with the industrial problem. After a brief stay at Springhill, he was invited to act as assistant to the rector of Trinity Church, Montreal. He owed his invitation to Rev. John Almond, whom he first met at Shigawake, Bay Chaleur, and who is still Canon of Trinity.

Norwood here attracted large audiences as usual, and was soon recognized as a man with a future. His call to Cronyn Memorial Church, London, Ontario, followed. In London he stayed five years, stirring and inspiring crowds with his eloquence and the reality of his message. He had written at Springhill the first draft of "The Witch of

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Endor," besides much of "His Lady of the Sonnets." He continued the writing and revision, and the Sonnets were published in 1915 while he was in London. They brought him instantly into wide recognition as a poet of masterful art and clear prophetic vision. Since 1915, nearly every year, some new work in poetry has issued from his pen. He has now in preparation the story, "Mickey Maitland," already alluded to in these pages.

In 1919 Robert Norwood became the rector of St. Paul's Memorial Church, Overbrook, Philadelphia, Pa. So great are the crowds attracted by his eloquence, people sometimes stand throughout the service in order to hear him. It is not uncommon to see strong men of fine culture moved to tears by the vision of spiritual beauty presented in Norwood's preaching. He never accepts credulity for faith, nor prejudice for principle. He speaks the truth fearlessly in words that all unbiased minds understand — the universal terminology of thoughtful men and women.

The degree of Doctor of Civil Law was bestowed upon Robert Norwood in 1921, by his Alma Mater. He has recently been listed by The Philadelphia Forum, and is a distinguished

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lecturer, well known both in Canada and the United States. He feels the high trust of the times, and realizes his obligation to share with all, the responsibilities entailed in the evolution of the race.

The country surrounding Overbrook reminds one of South Devon. It is marked with hills and dales and heavily-wooded groves. The walking is good, and there is a rich variety of scenery. Every mile of the road from Overbrook to Valley Forge is memorable because of some interesting feature of the revolution. Thus our poet is at present in the atmosphere of the international, his proper environment. He himself has said: "The geography of earth is almost at an end; the future lies on the hill-tops and among the stars."

Though Robert Norwood was born in Canada, and most of the inspirations of his youth were Canadian, we readily concede that, like Bliss Carman, Charles G. D. Roberts, Arthur Stringer, Ernest Thompson Seton, Basil King, and many other Canadians, he belongs not only to us, but to all who speak in the English phrase, wherever they contribute their gifts to the peace and progress of the world.

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His correspondence is among the most brilliant, spontaneous, and delightful that it has been my privilege to receive. His face presents a happy hint of Hibernia; his heart is of the new world; his mind is universal. Such is Robert Norwood.

ANTHOLOGY

HIS LADY OF THE SONNETS

I

My soul awoke from slumber—the long ease
Of years that passed away in dull content,
Not caring what the world's deep voices
meant—

Sunk in my dreams, I heard their harmonies
Like wind-blown clamour of far-calling seas
That told of Ithaca to sailors spent
With trouble, and forgetful at the scent
And taste of fruit plucked from the lotus trees;

For as I slept, your footsteps on the grass,
Your voice, wrought once again the miracle
Of Eden; and I saw appear and pass
Eve in her beauty, binding still the spell
That Adam felt, when from his opened side
Stepped Woman forth in loveliness and pride.

II

I meet you in the mystery of the night,
A dear Dream-Goddess on a crescent moon;
An opalescent splendour, like a noon
Of lilies; and I wonder that the height
Should darken for the depth to give me light—

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Light of your face, so lovely that I swoon
With gazing, and then wake to find how soon
Joy of the world fades when you fade from
sight.

Beholding you, I am Endymion,
Lost and immortal in Latmian dreams;
With Dian bending down to look upon
Her shepherd, whose æonian slumber seems
A moment, twinkling like a starry gem
Among the jewels of her diadem.

III

If I could tell why, when you look at me,
Dreams that have visited half-wakeful nights
Re-form and shape themselves, and Pisgah-
sights
Fill one far valley to a purple sea;
And white-domed cities rise with porphyry,
Jacinth and sapphire gates, beneath the
heights,
Rose-flamed within the dawn where Phœbus
smites
Earth with his heel—claiming its lord to be;
Then would you know what my heart seeks to
say
And falters ere sufficient words be found:

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How all the voiceless night and vocal day
Love looks on you and trembles into sound;
Love longs and pleads for his one moment's
bliss—
You and he mingled in a silent kiss.

IV

My love is like a spring among the hills
Whose brimming waters may not be confined,
But pour one torrent through the ways that wind
Down to a garden; there the rose distills
Its nectar; there a tall, white lily fills
Night with anointing of two lovers, blind,
Dumb, deaf, of body, spirit, and of mind
From breathless blending of far-sundered wills.

Long ere my love had reached you, hard I strove
To send its torrent through the barren fields;
I wanted you, the lilyed treasure-trove
Of innocence, whose dear possession yields
Immortal gladness to my heart that knows
How you surpass the lily and the rose.

V

Like one great opal on the breast of Night,
Soft and translucent hangs the orb of June!
I hear wild pipings of a joyous tune
Played on a golden reed for the delight

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Of you, my hidden, lovely Eremite—
 You by the fountain from the marble hewn—
 You silent as in dream, with flowers strewn
About your feet—you goddess, robed in white!

Mute and amazed, I at the broken wall
 Lean fearful, lest the sudden, dreadful dawn
For me Diana's awful doom let fall;
 And I be cursed with curious Actæon,
Save that you find in me this strong defence—
My adoration of your innocence.

VI

When from the rose-mist of creation grew
 God's patient waiting in your wide-set eyes,
 The morning stars, and all the host that flies
On wings of love, paused at the wondrous blue
With which the Master, mindful of the hue,
 Stained first the crystal dome of summer skies;
 And afterward the violet that vies
With amethyst, before He fashioned you.

And I have trembled with those ancient stars;
 My heart has known the flame-winged seraph's
 song;
For no indifferent, dreamy eyelid bars
 Me from the blue, nor veils with lashes long
 Your love, that to my tender gazing grows
Bold to confess it: I am glad he knows!

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VII

There came three wise men riding from the east;

One was a king and brought a gift of gold;

And one bore frankincense that fate foretold;

While myrrh was offered by a mitred priest.

Nor ever hath Love's brave adventure ceased

Since that fair night ashine with stars and cold,

When even angels paused their wings to fold—
Love to adore made one with man and beast.

Accept three gifts I to thee gladly bring;

Each hath its own divine significance:

Gold is the Body thou hast crowned a king;

My Spirit is the prophet's frankincense;

Myrrh is the Mind which strives to tell thee all

Love's mystic and melodious ritual !

XXVIII

Companion of the highroad, hail! all hail!

Day on his shoulder flame of sunset bears,

As he goes marching where the autumn flares

A banner to the sky; in russet mail

The trees are trooping hither to assail

Twilight with spears; a rank of coward cares

Creep up, as though to take us unawares,

And find their stratagems of none avail.

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Accept the challenge of the royal hills,
And dare adventure as we always dared !
Life with red wine his golden chalice fills,
And bids us drink to all who forward fared—
Those lost, white armies of the host of dream ;
Those dauntless, singing pilgrims of the Gleam !

XXIX

Here have we made fair songs on psalteries
Played tenderly by lovers in all lands.
Sometimes the strings are smitten by harsh
hands
Of anger, doubt, and frowning jealousies ;
And sometimes are drawn forth sad threnodies
For dear Love dead. Let him who under-
stands
Man's way with Woman loose the mystic
bands
That bind my parabled heart-secrecies.

In dreams again o'er leagues of purple sea
My bark is borne to some far, fabled strand—
Dear, how the world is young ! I seem to be
One of famed Helen's lovers; her command
Is in your eyes as you gaze forth from Troy—
Immortal in your beauty and your joy.

ANTHOLOGY

XXX

My Lady of the Sonnets, one word more,
The last; and, after, let the silence fall.
Our year is ended, and things great and
small

Glow with its glory; could we live it o'er,
What would we scatter from its precious store
Of pearl, chalcedony, and topaz—all
The many-jewelled moments that we call
Love's treasure—we who had not loved before!

Into that treasure plunge we both our hands,
The while we laugh, and love, and live again.
What rainbow-splendours and what golden
sands
Fall from our fingers! . . . Now let come
the pain
And steal the shadow, moan the wintry sea;
Locked is the casket: in your hands the key!

FELLOW CRAFTSMEN

As in some workshop where the hammers ring
And bare-armed artisans toil, blow on blow,
To make each crude, imperfect member grow
To the completed plan, rise thou, and fling

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Aside all doubt and langour; strive to bring
The deed up to its best; in gladness go
Undaunted; have full confidence; and know
Thou and thy God can perfect everything!

Throughout the busy day He works with us
And knows that we are tired; He hears and
feels

The grind of every cog, the plaint, the fuss,
The purr of pinions in the thousand wheels
That whir for ever down the endless walls,
Where, as we toil, His light perpetual falls.

REINCARNATION

I saw three souls before a jasper throne
That stood, star-canopied, beyond the world
Where angels knelt before a Presence—furled
White wings and waited. In vast undertone
A Voice said: “Choose!” And instantly were
shown
Three chalices: one like a lily curled
About a stem of gold; one was empearled
In silver; one was carved from common stone.

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I saw three souls sink swiftly back to earth;

I heard three children wailing in the night;
I met three men of diverse rank and birth:

A king; a priest; a slave whose wretched plight
Moved me to pity, till mine ancient dream
Recalled the proverb: "Things are not what
they seem!"

A FALLEN ANGEL

Out of the light,
Into the night,
God, I am falling!
Fashioned of flame,
Spent with my shame,
God, I am calling!
All through the day
Sin has had sway—
Lost is the token;
Evening brings
Hurt of my wings,
Blackened and broken.
Child of a star,
Thine avatar,
Drunk from the revel;
Who am I, God,—
Spirit or clod,
Angel or devil?

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Yet Thou hast made
Me Thy sword-blade—
Sheathed, that its brightness
Flash up to win,
When the last sin
Burns into whiteness.

Hand that can smite,
Hold the hilt tight,
Draw, and strike faster!
Strike with me, Lord!
My soul Thy sword,
And Thou its Master.

Strike! till the day
Grow from the gray
Gloom of the peril;
And in the skies
Dream-domes arise—
Jacinth and beryl!

A LITANY

For what we to ourselves have done,
We who are miracles divine,
Flares from a universal sun,
Or lees from an Olympian wine;

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For the abuse of laughter,
And tears that follow after;
For love betrayed, and hope delayed:
 Cry we mercy, God!

For what we to ourselves have said:
 “Thou hast much goods; peace, O my Soul,
Nor fret if beggars cry for bread,
 And show their rags in hope of dole.
God giveth thee much pleasure,
Want is the poor man’s measure!”
For all of these dark heresies:
 Cry we mercy, God!

For what we on ourselves have wrought—
 Wild havoc with the weird, grotesque,
Abortive images of thought,
 Making of beauty the burlesque;
For much pretence in praying;
And little heart at playing;
For smothered smiles and countless guiles:
 Cry we mercy, God!

For casting dice where Jesus bleeds
 Upon His cross, naked, alone;
Unheedful in the noise of creeds
 Of Him and His last dying moan;

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For Rahab robed in scarlet,
Cursed with the title, "Harlot,"
By the decrees of Pharisees:
Cry we mercy, God!

For the delight of out-of-doors
Missed in our minsters made of stone,
Unmindful that pure incense pours
To Thee from wild rose-petals blown
Down forest-aisles; that altar fires
Burn in the sunset on the hills,
And from the pine-wood's ancient spires
The varied chime of evening fills
All hearts with rapture; for the light
Lost on white lilies, and the blue
Of heaven wasted, the dear night
With her gold stars and silver dew
Neglected. Oh, for what we fail
To find from life so rich and fair—
The rain, the snow, the sleet, the hail,
Summer, and blossom-breathing air;
For every useless sorrow,
And fears for the to-morrow,
Not knowing Thee, great Deity:
Cry we mercy, God!

ANTHOLOGY

THE WITCH OF ENDOR

Act I, page 39.

Saul—(*to Ahimelech.*)

Priest, I would set my love
Against Jehovah's Word and dare the gulf
Of Tophet for the lips which He has forced
To prophesy against her heart!

Ahimelech—(*recoils in horror from Saul and covers his eyes with his hands.*)

Saul! Saul!

Saul—(*to Loruhamah.*)

Come, Loruhamah! Let us leave this place,
And go beyond the hills to Babylon—
There I will build for you fair palaces
And pour the balms of Calah on your head;
Deep aisles of odours shall resound with song
And laugh of little children—Yours, O
Heart!

For you the shadow of my hand shall fall
Upon Euphrates, seize Chaldea's crown,
Make Nineveh a name within my ring!

Come with me!

Loruhamah—(*weeping.*) Nay!

Saul— Come, Loruhamah! Come!

Loruhamah—(*lifts up her head and gazes steadily into the eyes of Saul. After a moment's pause, she withdraws from him and speaks.*)

ROBERT NORWOOD

Oh, I am fearful of a threatened doom—
Dark treachery that weaves a silver web
To drag you down through me to such a fate.
My name would grow a by-word and a hissing,

Should love prevail on me! . . . Rise up,
my Saul!

Ascend the throne and rule your people well;
Lose your great pain in plans of magnitude
So vast, a god's white, awful arm might shake,
Fulfilling them! This must you do for me:
Then pride shall wrestle with my woman's
will

And conquer when I shall most want to weep!

Ahimelech—(*moves over to Loruhamah with uplifted hands.*)

On you be shadowing of seraphim!

Act II, page 58.

Doeg—(*draws a scroll from his girdle.*)

The King's decree awaits his signature
Against soothsayers; now are you condemned
And driven from this land! . . . The cords
are tight,

My Priestess!

Loruhamah—(*startled and staring at the scroll.*)

You—you—!

ANTHOLOGY

Doeg— Well?

Loruhamah— You say that Saul—!

Doeg—

That Saul has issued a decree against
Soothsayers! You will throw your shadow
far,
Or ever you prevent me!

Loruhamah— Saul has not
Commanded this!

Doeg—(*offering her the decree.*)
Then read the writing.

Loruhamah—(*takes the scroll and reads.*)
Saul!

(*The scroll falls from her hand; Doeg picks it up and watches her with a smile of triumph.*)

Doeg—Poor Loruhamah!

Loruhamah— I — I —!

Doeg— Just one word,
And I will make the writing void.

Loruhamah—(*breathlessly.*)
You mean—?

Doeg—That which I say.

Loruhamah—(*bitterly.*) O Ashtoreth!

Doeg— One word!

ROBERT NORWOOD

Loruhamah—

O Serpent! I am in your coils.

Doeg—Come, show your wisdom.

Loruhamah— In destroying Saul?

Doeg—Not in destroying him.

Loruhamah— You said that I
Must lure his soul to Tophet!

Doeg—

Soul—not body!

Destroy his trust in what he deems divine,
Until Jehovah is for him a name,
And all that he held holy is a name,
His crown, his throne, his kingdom but a
name—

An empty sound—a cry across the waste
And wildness of the world! As for the rest—
I care not; have your way with what is left!

Loruhamah—(*with a cry of anguish.*)

His body I may have, but not his soul—
His soul that held me that first night we met
In Askelon—the soul of Saul that holds
Me steadfast to the dream that we may meet
Somewhere beyond the boundaries of earth,
When love has conquered the indifference
Of all the gods! Destroy his soul and keep
His body—! Pour the wine out—keep the jar!

ANTHOLOGY

Shatter the harp and keep the soundless
strings!

Better this flesh were shredded to the bone;
These eyes torn out, to which great minstrels
sang,

And all my beauty vanished into dust;
Than my fair womanhood work witchery
And bane of madness on the man I love!

Oh, little do you know of women, who
Set sex against the highest; think we care
For trinkets—that our hearts are satisfied
With dulcet strummings of a psaltery
In dim seraglios! . . . Set my sex against
The soul of Saul and wreck him with a kiss?
Now by the womanhood that you despise,
I will not do this thing—not for the gods
Who shame their high estate with use of you!
And though you lead Saul to the gates of
hell,

And hurl him to the lowest pit thereof,
My love will follow after him; my tears
Quench the last fire that burns to torture him;
My cry assail the doors of heaven until
The gods rise up and bid us enter in!

(As Loruhahah finishes these words, the doors of the palace open and Saul appears. She covers her face with her mantle and moves swiftly out at left, disappearing among the

ROBERT NORWOOD

trees. Saul stands between the pillars gazing after her. Doeg turns to the King and makes obeisance. Saul slowly descends to Doeg.)

Saul—Who is that woman?

Doeg— A witless creature, crazed
By loss of him she loved.

Saul— Of him she loved!
Deal tenderly with her.

Doeg— Yea, tenderly!
The writing waits your signature, my Lord.

Act IV. page 95.

Saul to David—What is there in your voice—
What craft of fingers on the sounding strings,
That I am lifted instantly to heights
Out of vast, dim abysses when you play?

David—I know not save that in my heart is
love

For all things underneath the sky—a sense
Of beauty that I see yet do not see—
Of music that I hear and do not hear—
A consciousness of forces in myself,
Transcending what I see and hear and know!
Sometimes the many-coloured veils of earth
Are lifted by invisible, swift hands
And glory of the infinite is near;

ANTHOLOGY

Then comes awareness of a comradeship
With God and all His angels, and I rise
Through unknown spaces of the heaven's
blue,

Lost in the adoration of a love—
Self-limited and by the creature bound
That it might share the limitless and pure
Possession of itself!

David—(*standing before Saul with his harp.*)
Saul, in a vision I have learned that kings
May not be glad.

Saul— I, visionless, have learned
This of myself ! . . . What did you see?

David— A King,
Down by the brook called Cedron; on His
head
A crown of thorns and in His eyes the tears!
Behind Him stood a mighty multitude
That melted into distances so far
I could not follow! When I woke from sleep
I sang my King of Sorrow on the harp.

ROBERT NORWOOD

(David touches the strings and sings.)

Down by the stream of the waters

Came the King, and His face was sad—
Sad with a grief beyond belief,

For a bitter grief He had:
To be a king means sorrowing—

A king may not be glad!

Down by the stream of the waters

Came the King, and alone at night;
His robe was torn, a crown of thorn

Was on His brow so white:
They placed it there who did not care—

His eyes with tears were bright!

Down by the stream of the waters,

Where it flows through the valley of death,
He came—the King—all sorrowing;

A sob was in His breath:
They broke His heart who stood apart—
The crowd that wondereth!

(Saul is shaken with tears. Michal steals to his side, soothing him.)

Saul—O King of Sorrow! . . . David,
who is He?

David—Messias! whom our father Jacob
saw.

Saul—A king may not be glad!

ANTHOLOGY

Act V, page 118.

Loruhamah—(*kneeling at Saul's feet*)

If you have still the love that made me fair
Unto your eyes, then follow far beyond
The line of Eastern hills to Babylon,
And build those promised crystal domes of
dream,

Forgetting you were ever Saul the King!

Saul—The host is waiting on the heights for
Saul!

Loruhamah—(*clasping her hands and looking up
at Saul.*)

Once you did plead—now Loruhamah pleads.
We cannot call the years back from the knees
Of Ashtoreth, but life is yet most fair
And full of promise for our love delayed.

Oh, take me, Saul! . See how I plead to you!
Go not from me to death, but go with me
To life—sweet life! . . . Surely the gods
Are satisfied; they will not grudge the lees
Left in the cup of Loruhamah's love!

I have been strong, kept faith; but now my
will

Flows down, like water from an age-long
height

Of ice-capped mountain melting in the sun!

ROBERT NORWOOD

Saul—(*tenderly stroking her hair*)

There is no music breathed by the harp
Sweeter than your dear voice that tells me
this,

And in the knowledge of your love for me
Death will become a falling into sleep;
But my last moment thunders with such
sound,

That all earth's voices mingle into it!

Perchance Jehovah has set me this task
In mercy, that my stormy life may end
With some wide splendour of a sunset-
sky!

(*Michal comes down and kneels at Loruhamah's side.*)

Michal—My father, hearken unto Loruhamah!
Behold her tears! Can you withstand her
tears?

Saul—Jehovah calls! Who may withstand His
voice?

Michal, behold I see where all was dark:
David begins where Saul is at an end,
And Samuel, anointing him, foretold
The House of Jesse following the House
Of Kish upon the throne of Israel.

Go, tell David that Saul forgave the deed;
And when they find me dead on Gilboa,

ANTHOLOGY

Yield him the crown—yea, place it on his brows,

That song and youth's sweet laughter stir again

Throughout this stricken land, and all the world

Grow glorious and golden in the sun!

(Saul bends over Loruhamah, takes her hands and lifts her to his side.)

My Loruhamah, one fair city waits
Our coming—fairer than far Babylon—
Builded beyond the clouds! I go to lay
Its streets with sapphires and adorn the walls
With chrysoprase—make every gate a pearl,
A moon of summer magic, musical
At turning of each graven silver hinge,
Melodious as filmy waterfalls!

(He turns to Michal, who rises at his word to be enfolded with Loruhamah in his arms.)

Michal, arise! The time for tears is past.
Not on this star shall all the tale be told
Of Saul and Loruhamah and their love.

(There is a sudden and nearing blast of trumpets with a mighty shout of voices. The full, red disk of the sun almost fills the entrance of the cave. Tenderly Saul frees himself from the embrace of Michal and Loruhamah. He goes towards the steps, ascends, pauses and

ROBERT NORWOOD

with arms wide open, looks down at them. Michal turns from Loruhamah and runs to the steps, looking up at Saul. Loruhamah stands as Saul left her, looking away from him with hopeless sorrow in her eyes.)

Michal—My father! O my father! Do not go!

Voices—Saul!

Loruhamah.—(as Saul turns at the sound of the voices and leaves the cave.)

Ashtoreth!

Michal—

My Father!

Voices—

Saul! Saul! Saul!

(Michal sinks weeping at the foot of the steps. Loruhamah comes slowly down to the front with uplifted arms of defiance to the gods.)

Loruhamah—Again you gods of darkness and of hate—

You thrones and crowns of everlastingness;
You high above the multitude of stars,
Immovable, hard and unchanging gods!
Again you laugh and nod upon our pain
And stare down gulfs perpetual of blue,
Divinely lifted, deathlessly remote!

No more shall you hear aught of stricken me—
I go upon my way, supreme in love,
And answer back to your indifference
Eternal calling of my heart for Saul!

ANTHOLOGY

THE PIPER AND THE REED

I am a reed—a little reed
Down by the river,
A whim of God whose moment's need
Was that the Giver
Might blow melodious and long
One cadence of eternal song.

Through me are blown
Wild whisperings of wind from hills
No sun hath known.
The splendour that Orion spills
On purple space;
The golden loom of Leo's mane;
The scintillance of Vega's face;
Dim unto dark:
And great Arcturus' far refrain
Fades to a silence that is pain,
When, like a lark,
Riseth melodious and strong
That cadence of eternal song.
God is the Piper—I, the reed
Down by the river for his need.
He who in beauty goeth by
The marches of the meadowy sky,
A-piping on the many reeds

ROBERT NORWOOD

His canticle,
Paused in His playing;
For He found
An under-sound
Failed of the music that He made.
Wild winds went straying,
Like sheep lost on the daisied meads—
Scattered by discord and afraid,
Lost from the fold
They knew of old.
My God had need
Of one more reed—
Had need of me
To make the perfect harmony.
I am that under-sound,
That needed note.
Eternally the Piper tried
Reed after reed until He found
Me growing by the river side,
And laughing at the leaves that float
Forever down its burnished tide.

How frail my body is—how frail
And common of its kind;
A reed among a field of reeds
A-tremble to the wind—
The wind that threshes like a flail

ANTHOLOGY

Until my body bleeds!
Yet through me such wild music blows
The Piper laughs among the stars.
Know you the Piper? Little scars
Burn on His brow, each shoulder shows
Wounds of a knotted scourge that fell
To hurt Him from the hands of Hell!
Welcome, O Wind!
All hail, O Pain!
One little reed—one little reed,
To fill the Piper's far refrain,
Is broken till its body bleed;
Glad that the Minstrel Lord doth find
A tone of His eternal need.

AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK

I am a priest upon whose head
God long ago poured holy oil;
He gave to me a Word and said:
“With this thou shalt mankind assoil!”

Since I went forth God to obey,
Life has revealed me many things—
I find it very hard to say
What is most dear: The task that brings

ROBERT NORWOOD

Bread to the eater, or the rest
That follows toil; the love of friends,
Of books, of song—each is most blessed
And always with contentment blends.

A stone, a faggot or a flower;
A bird in rapture of its flight;
December-snow or April-shower;
The velvet vastness of the night,

When Mother Moon has left the stars
And with the winds gone gossiping—
Or leans upon the gate that bars
Dawn from untimely entering.

These hold for me unending charm,
Fill me with wonderment and awe
That men should ever think of harm,
Fencing their lives about with law.

The world is such a lovely place—
A jewelled pendant on Love's chain!
I marvel that a human face
Should pale with anger or with pain.

I marvel at the cry for bread
That thunders round the waking world;
The tumult of the legion's tread
That shakes the earth, as souls are hurled

ANTHOLOGY

In battle to destroy the souls
God grew in His great garden, when
He won past all His other goals—
Triumphant at the birth of men!

Who can behold the dance of Dawn—
Juggling with stars like tinselled balls,
Vesture in mantle of a wan,
White glory whose dim splendour falls

Upon the mountains; and not feel
Himself transcendent? Who can hear
Clangour of wild birds and the peal
Of matin-bells across the clear,

Blue sky, commingling with the shout
Of children on their way to school,
And fail at once to be about
God's business?—As within a pool

You are reflected, Nature shows
The miracle of what you are—
The highest that Creation knows:
Lord of the earth and every star!

I am a priest upon whose head
God long ago poured holy oil;
He gave to me a Word and said:
“With this thou shalt mankind assoil!”

ROBERT NORWOOD

I come from out the Holy Place
With benediction for the earth,
To wipe the tears from every face
And tell the fallen one his worth.

My business is to be a priest
Whose holy task is to forgive,
To bid the beggar to the feast,
To touch the dead and make them live.

I know not any fear of thrones,
No claim of Scribe and Pharisee;
My word is set to many tones
Of lute and harp and psaltery.

I have no temple and no creed,
I celebrate no mystic rite;
The human heart is all I need
Wherein I worship day and night:

The human heart is all I need,
For I have found God ever there—
Love is the one sufficient creed,
And comradeship the purest prayer!

I bow not down to any book,
No written page holds me in awe;
For when on one friend's face I look
I read the Prophets and the Law!

ANTHOLOGY

I need no fountain filled with blood
To cleanse my soul from mortal sin;
For love is an unbounded flood—
Freely I go to wash therein.

Love laughs at boundaries of wrath
And is as infinite as God;
Breaks down each wall, finds out each path
Where wilful, straying feet have trod.

Love is the Word God gave and said:
“With it thou shalt mankind assoil!”
Then forthwith poured upon my head
Anointing of His holy oil!

THE PLOUGHMAN

The upper and the lower springs,
The summer-fountains fail;
A frowning sky his challenge flings
With thunder through the hail;
The autumn holds her mantle-folds
To veil a pallid brow—
She pities me and mourns to see
My pain upon the plough:
For I must down the furrow fare
And cleave the clod with sharpened share.

ROBERT NORWOOD

Witless of wind that finds my face,
I lean against the blast
And plough to my appointed place—
Yon sapling like a mast;
I plough this way till shut of day,
Steady upon the mark;
Reckless of cold, the handles hold
From dawn until the dark—
This thing my duty: cleave the clod,
Ploughing the field alone with God !

GIORDANO BRUNO

The Monk of Nola is indeed no more;
His cell is empty, and the threefold cord
Hangs with its cowl beside Saint Peter's sword !
Vainly the Vatican leans on the lore
Of Councils; what was everywhere of yore
Held by the faithful, and with one accord,
Yields to the moment of his mighty word,
Who looked not always after but before.

Rise from your ashes where yon statue stands
In Campo di fiora ! Bruno, speak
That word of thunder to the world abroad:
Man is the Sacrament made by Christ's hands;
He is, of life's ascending slope, the peak—
The crown—the consummation of his God!

ANTHOLOGY

Even thou, Giovanni, my familiar friend
In whom I trusted? What! thou art afraid
To look at me? Do Bruno's eyes hurt thee?
Nay, do not hide behind the chasubles
Of Holy Inquisition; speak thy mind,
And tell the Fathers that which they would
know:

How certain books I wrote traduce the creeds
Of Mother Church!

What pleasant nights we spent
Within thy palace; what discourse we had
While others slept, and I led thee beyond
The crystal spheres of old to boundless space!
What moved thee, O Venetian, to betray
Thy friend? . . . Nay, mutter not, nor cross
thyself!

Giordano hath not made a covenant
With devils! . . . Yea, my Father, read the
charge.

So that is what my accusation saith?
The Monk of Nola is indeed no more!
He was a curious boy who loved to look,
Without distraction of crude, painted things
Hung on the wall, tarnished by candle-smoke,
Out of the window where he knelt to pray;
For he had learned that God is not confined

ROBERT NORWOOD

In paint and mortar, that He is revealed,
As the Apostle saith, through what He made.
He found no virtue in a saint's thighbone;
No miracle in the Madonna's face
Above her altar, when the sanctus bell
Rings and a wafer is become the Christ!
Yea, rather was he caught within the loops
Of light thrown by the stars among the vines,
Or fastened by the many-coloured cords
Of sunrise. Noonday magic on the grapes;
The crickets chirping where the wheat is ripe;
The call of birds; the river's ancient song;
Trees and the carnival of summer-flowers;
Claimed Bruno when he tried to be a monk.

Then came Copernicus! At first I laughed,
Railing with many words: What! Earth so
fixed—
The central point of heaven, round which the
sun
Wheels and stars turn—a floating sphere in
space?
Then reason woke within me and I found
Copernicus was right, and went one step
Past my new master—taught that nothing
bounds
The universe but law.

ANTHOLOGY

Nature is one.

One purpose weaves the weft within the warp
Of matter, though the stuff be molten suns,
Or atoms in the amethyst that gleams
Upon the finger of His Grace—my judge!

When I was but a boy at Nola, fond
Of roving, on a summer day I climbed
The hill Cicada; from its height I saw
Vesuvius was like a cone of grey,
In contrast with the vineyards at my feet:
Later I stood above Pompeii, found
My hill was changed to barren, rocky slopes;
Round me were many blossoms and the vines!
I learned by this illusion of the eyes,
To challenge sense with reason—prove no fact
By feeling—Fathers, is that heresy?
He is an infidel who dares to bound
God's might! Take now a creed of Mother
Church—

The Mother whom I love—hold ye one thought
That cramps Creation and Omnipotence?
Then ye are heretic. Find God in Nature,
As ye discover artists by their work.

Ponder the lilies of the field, said Christ.
O Priests of Venice! ye who try me here
Against my death at Rome for heresy,

ROBERT NORWOOD

What do ye know of lilies? Can ye tell
The Monk of Nola how the lilies grow?
I knew them ere I learned to sing High Mass,
Or hear confession and expound the Book!
If only, ye seek God beyond the stars,
How can ye hope to find Him Who is near?
If ye disdain the portico of heaven,
How can ye love the House not made with
hands,
Eternal in the heavens? Oh, how ye rob
Life of its joy! How narrow is the world
Wherein ye move! Your sky is but a dome
Of hammered brass alight with holy wicks
Placed in the great concave; your moon a lamp
Borne in procession round the altar—earth!
God's truth! ye think as though the universe
Were Peter's Church at Rome, and all the
flowers
Are waxen—though the world is white with
bloom!
I break the dome, and exorcise the fear
That haunts the faith of men; I say to them:
God stands closer to us than we to self.
He is the Soul of our soul, He unites
All Nature. Grain of incense, drop of oil,
Hath Him as much as any Holy Mass!

ANTHOLOGY

Lift up a broken oleander stalk,
A wheaten straw, a pebble round and smooth
And ye have lifted high the very Host!
Man is the Mass; therein God's love trans-
forms

The elements—making of them His flesh!
God is existence; everything is God.
Pain, suffering, and sin—aye, death itself—
Are shadows creeping down Vesuvius,
When the sun rises; shadows disappear
At noontide glory, life is at the morn;
Therefore these glooms against the mounting
sun

Fade fast, as men are more aware of God:
When life has reached its zenith, there will be
No shadow anywhere of pain and sin,
For all will share its glad meridian!

Now, Fathers, will ye send me bound to Rome—
A prisoner, like Paul, of Jesus Christ,
And doomed to die for witness of my word?
Wherein is Bruno heretic? What truth
Have ye which I hold not, and even more?
Yea, all that is contained within the Creeds
And Councils of the Holy Catholic Church,
Giordano holds. But faith transcends both
creed

ROBERT NORWOOD

And council, is the evidence of things
Not seen. Is faith the journey or the road?
Faith is the pilgrim with a scrip and staff,
Taking all roads at pleasure. Is the Church
Weak as to fabric, that the stake must stand
Forever as the symbol of her strength?
Dogma that must be buttressed by the ban
Of excommunication is not truth!
Who hates in the defence of what he holds,
Or drops one bitter word against the name
Of his antagonist can not be true:
The calm of Christ before Caiaphas;
Paul's manner with the Areopagus;
All martyred love: bear witness to my word.

And so ye have condemned me! Venice gives
My body unto Rome—this night, perchance,
Or on the morrow, I must take the road
Of martyrdom to Rome—how many more
Must travel that same road, because their faith
Is overmuch! But old skins ever fail
New wine, and from the Branch—Copernicus—
Thought-clusters hang, which from the press of
Time

Will pour fermenting liquor to destroy
Your moulded bottles. Bind me to the stake;
Scatter my ashes on the Tiber's tide;
The world will kneel in tears for what ye did!

ANTHOLOGY

THE MAN OF KERIOTH

Act II. page 72.

Bartimæus—Mine is no house of dream;
'Tis very real to me and beautiful.
O Philip, can you tell me how a bird
Feels on the nest when all the speckled eggs
Melt underneath her heart to feathered balls
Of chirping hunger? How the bleating ewe
Finds her three lambs and calls them to her
side,
Though there be many mothers on the hill?
That is their secret never to be told—
And mine the certainty of things that eyes
Behold and see not.

Act V. page 128.

Mary— But, this I found:
A world not ready for this lover-man,
Confusing him with images of clay
On temple tables, seeking for a sign—
A manifesting of his power—his power!
God! how the stupid people miss the path
That winds past every garden gate to heaven.
His power! Oh, it is upon his mouth
And in his eyes—the touch—the way of him!
Supreme and tender miracle of man,

ROBERT NORWOOD

What do they, asking you for any sign?
Bartimæus—Ay, you know Christ!

Mary— And of these foolish men,
Judas is first. Oh, what has blinded him
That he can miss the sun on Jesus' hair!

Bartimæus—He pays the price strong men
must pay on whom
The fretting business of the world depends.

Listen—a parable of four men, told
By Persian Magi: “When God made the
world

Four angels watched him turn the star in
space—

The first said: Give to me, O God, thy star!
The second: Tell me, God, how it was made!
The third: Why is there any world at all?
The fourth knelt to adore and went away
To make another like God’s golden star.”
These souls are known in human history:
The man of business, then the scientist,
The sage and poet. Judas is the first,
And we the last—only as men rise up
From holding and accounting for a star
To that pure worship of the beautiful
In holy art of giving like the Christ’s,
Will they no longer clamour for a sign—
The sign will be the service of their love.

ANTHOLOGY

Mary—The way to Christ must be as you
have said—

Past any need that holds one bound by love
Of builded things and faith in ancient law,
Customs and forms. A spirit must be free
To tread the upper air of day with him.

Bartimæus—Ay, that is Christ, but men must
travel far
Before they find the freedom of his feet.

BILL BORAM

O beauty of the autumn days that die,
O magic of the wind and shout of seas,
O lifting of the little wings that fly,
O marvel of gay blossoms and the trees!
Join with the miracle of human hearts,
The tender touching of all friendly hands,
Until the figured veil of Nature parts
To show how near to flesh the spirit stands.
Come, love of life, and lift the gate that bars
Man from his lost dominion of all things;
And let there be a going up to stars
With tumult of his long-unfolded wings.

AN APPRECIATION

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ANADA is a land with little or no classical background. Our people do not know much of the classics, nor do they much care to know more. They are too busy making the classics of the future, the railroads, farms and cities that shall be the bases of new dramas, new songs and new civilizations. "Old things are passing away, behold all things are becoming new," says our up-to-date western creator, and busies himself with original purposes, embodying his effort in a more comprehensive social state and a more universal statesmanship.

In the presence of these facts, it is not difficult to understand why, when the task of making an estimate of our Canadian poetry is essayed by one whose standards of taste have been acquired in older literary fields, he sometimes proves quite unfit for the work he has undertaken. The task is not his. He is

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somewhat like the old-country butler who, though he wears his uniform with self-conscious dignity, turns up his nose as soon as he begins to function. His superiorities are not current here at face value.

We know to-day that we do not understand one another and we are willing to admit it. This is a tremendous advance on the past. Perhaps this is enough advance for the present. It should lead us, without prejudice to our own point of view, to realize that there are others. Still more should it lead us, without prejudice to others, to new and just appraisement of our own point of view. Meantime, we deliberately ignore all criticism which seems to be based upon the assumption implied in the question "Can genuine poetry come out of Canada?" Not that we wish to commend where others condemn, but because we wish to find in Canadian poetry those standards of thought and feeling, life and law, best suited to the genius of this new western land.

That we are warranted in making such a quest--such a demand, if you will--seems clear. It is not enough that the poet shall discover the beauty in nature and describe or celebrate it in verse. That is the high function

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of pagan poetry, which we all so much love, but which has now become an habitual phase of art. It is not enough that he celebrates moral sentiment in platitudinous numbers. That too has been done for ages, but the chief habitat of such poetry—Europe—was recently a shambles.

The true poet—the poet we need in this land, whatever other lands may think they need—is he who lays the foundations of universal brotherhood so firmly that they shall abide; so permanently that the tragedies of the Victorian and the Georgian eras shall never again be enacted on the most benighted shores of the world-encircling seas. The poet who does not inspire creative and revolutionary thought, in the sense in which the sayings of Jesus were revolutionary, is negligible in this new era, when the spirit of goodwill should be made electric in all lands.

There have been centuries, and there may be others, when poetry shall demand only that our singers shall chant more beautifully than ever the songs and sagas of the wild. Indeed, there will always be many who will do this, and we give them due appreciation, but ours are times when the insistent voices of truth,

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eternally sounding in the hearts of poets divinely illumined, must be heard like tocsins flinging the strong words over sea and land; when the beacons of the old truth never yet fully accepted and tested by the people of earth, must be lighted; when that universal religion interpreted and promised many centuries ago, must be embodied in mass-experience, though it be for the first time.

The poet who sees not these things may be lyrical; he may be idyllic, but for all virile and divine purposes, his equation is zero. If our standards are careless of form, the loss is great. The supreme inspiration cannot have expression too lofty, nor the song of life too noble a score. The message of art for this age cannot be too explicit and vital. In the best sense of the word, it must be revolutionary. The poet must lay foundations of reality, which, when all things are shaken, shall remain. Whatever edifice may thereafter rise out of the poet's dream must be built on these bases, in beauty eternal, truth unchanging, life undying.

Once more, out of the prolific Maritime Provinces, comes a maker of songs and plays, not too late in the Canadian dawn to have an

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important share in creating the nation's ideals and in shaping its character and life. The quality of Robert Norwood's gift is revealed in seven volumes of lyrics and drama, in all of which his wide range of vision and sympathy is expressed in highly artistic form and phrase, while his new and illuminating interpretation gives to all his dramatic work the joy of constant surprise.

Not only is Robert Norwood a poet, but he has been called to be a prophet, and has felt the live coal touch his lips with its altar flame. As a result he passes across the continent, kindling the hearts of the people with a passion for the real beauty. As a priest he has removed the veil which hides from our eyes the glory of the commonplace. As an artist he has pictured the whole truth—the truth in its universal conception, not hiding its warnings nor saying smooth things for the sake of brief popularity. As a poet, he associates the vision of truth with the beauty of his art, and his never-resting energy expresses both with a clarity vividly dramatic.

When "His Lady of the Sonnets" appeared, Norwood was at once recognized as a new and refreshing influence in Canadian poetry. The

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book was a slight volume, and was usually read from cover to cover at one sitting. Such a reading by the present writer led to a correspondence with the author. This resulted in a valued friendship which will always endure.

The first number of the sonnet sequence gives a thrill of pleasant expectancy whose fine promise is amply fulfilled in the beautiful imagery and sustained art which here unveils the loveliness of this poetic conception:

“Sunk in my dreams, I heard their harmonies
Like wind-blown voices of far-calling seas.”

One seems to hear in these lines the elemental music of the sea of life. They are spontaneous. They glide along almost with the music of wings. The reader knows that here is a chord out of the heart of Nature herself, telling to the heart of man all the poignant meanings of the deep voices of the world. This is no falsetto note that cannot be maintained throughout the score with swelling volume and with deepening power. The initial beauty is but a suggestion of that which follows:

“An opalescent splendour, like a noon
Of lilies
Love looks on you and trembles into sound.”

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Norwood is not much interested in things. He declares that he does not know flowers individually. "You will notice," he says, "in my sonnets, that I confine myself to lilies and roses. These I love and understand. The rest are in the great pageant, and please me in the mass." And yet our poet thrills to every mood of Nature:

"Wind-voices blown
Through woodland hollows where I walk alone
When twilight and its shadows slowly creep."

"The dawn
Woke on the world with matin song of birds
And choral thunder of the wind upon
The mountains."

If this is not the voice of Nature's own child we know no such voice. He sees, too, the inevitableness of tragedy:

"Thou God-vacated sky,
Thunder upon my head the riving flame;
There is no more for me to do but die."

But as the sequence further unfolds, its chastening purpose and its healing power are also revealed, till in the later sonnets a comradely feeling prevails. There is assurance that the pruning of the vineyard has brought forth fruit.

"Life with red wine his golden chalice fills,
And bids us drink to all who forward fared—

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Those lost, white armies of the host of dream;
Those dauntless singing pilgrims of the Gleam!"

The last sonnet of the series describes experience as a golden treasury into which, having braved the tragedy, we all may dip. Then,

"What rainbow-splendours and what golden
sands
Fall from our fingers!"

Canadian poets have created some notable sonnets, and while we desire, as much as possible, to avoid the use of superlatives, it will readily be granted, I believe, that this sequence ranks in beauty and distinction with the most inspired Canadian achievement in this field.

Apart from the sonnets themselves, the most distinguished poem in this volume is "Dives in Torment." Its somewhat riotous and disjunctive narrative is a carefully designed effort to show truthfully the ravings of a soul in its hell-delirium. The effect is powerfully shown, yet all the while it is an unfoldment of the profound meaning and purpose of tragedy (that is, hell) in human experience.

The reader who is familiar with Wilfred Campbell's "Lazarus" will be interested to learn that when Norwood wrote "Dives," he

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had not read the Campbell poem, but knew deeply Francis Thompson's "The Hound of Heaven," and felt the influence of its thunder. It will be seen, however, that Norwood's poem is of quite a different order, and has a unique excellence.

The subject is treated at greater length by him, and with a dramatic vigour of which he is something of a master. This poem consists of seventy-four quatrains, in which he depicts the rich rouè in hell, hate-filled, defiant; ridiculing, pitying and scorning Jehovah. Lazarus, the beggar, despite Abraham's refusal of help to Dives, descends lovingly to the place of torment, his compassion prompting him, as in the case of Campbell's Lazarus, to bring solace to the heart of the rich man. Thus far the attitude of Dives in the two poems is entirely different. Campbell makes him penitent. The only similarity is in the pity of Lazarus. But here Campbell's poem ends, and, one might almost say, Norwood's begins.

The rich man, supposing that the beggar from heaven has come only to taunt him, at first spurns his visitor, but afterwards confesses his folly in bartering

"Life in the love of the kinship of things"

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for the baubles of wealth and popularity with all the glitter of a worldly station. He perceives that love is shining out of the eyes and soul of Lazarus. He is convinced that this man whom he first knew as a creature of the dust, begging at his palace gate, is in reality a great, heroic, love-illumined soul who has come out of the very heart of eternal Goodness to prove himself a brother to one who had despised him. Then the rich man cries:

"I am undone,
Conquered by love of a Love that hath sought
Me unto hell! . . .
Lazarus, art thou the same that I saw
Begging for crumbs?"

He realizes now that the love of one other being, and that being recently a beggar, has turned hell into heaven; has turned the beggar into a Messiah.

"Thou art Messias! . . . And this Paradise!"

The remainder of the book under consideration is composed of "Sonnets and Songs," all of which are good, and some exceedingly fine. Had Robert Norwood written nothing further, his place in Canadian letters would have been, if not spacious, at least lofty and secure. This book, however, was only the

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small beginning, though a notable one, of a series of volumes which already place our author among our most significant poets. Having once read it, the reader will always turn back to "His Lady of the Sonnets" with new surprise and delight.

In lyric verse, the poet is his own spokesman; but when he turns to drama, he must create proxies to voice his words and speak in divers characters. When the dramatist chooses spokesmen already known to his readers because of their familiar places in the world literatures, he finds it necessary, in a measure at least, to recreate those characters, otherwise he would be adding no personal contribution to art, for the personalities already stand out conspicuously in the world's classics. The dramatist must give his people some new charm, some novel human appeal, if he would hold his reader and warrant his effort.

In Norwood's first drama, "The Witch of Endor," there is no break with the classical story of Saul and Samuel, David and Jonathan, or, indeed, with that of the Witch herself. Yet the play is charmingly original. It is the same Saul and the same witch, and yet it is also another Saul and another witch that

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move, one with sombre majesty, the other with self-consuming nobility, through all the tragic scenes of this drama with its strange allure-
ment. Our poet has created a Saul moody and aloof in the presence of his own people, stormfully disdainful of their God who has shattered, by the word of His high priest, all the hope of his early and imperishable passion for a lovely and accomplished young woman of an alien race. His own people, in the bigoted patois of their narrow creed, describe her as "a sorceress." And the witch? Norwood has conceived, with real genius, not a weazened and uncanny old hag, as the witch is so generally pictured, but a wonderful soul, noble in courage, resourceful in strategy, and faithful utterly in the highest obligations of her soul.

Our poet makes the whole interest revolve around this woman. It is the thwarting of her highest earthly hopes that constitutes the really tragical element in the drama. Yet it is made very clear that her highest hope, her spiritual dream, is never thwarted. She is regardful, as far as may be, of the respectable conventions of the world, but is never for one moment untrue to those realities before which, in the high

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court of her great soul, all respectabilities must in their final judgment bow low and be as uncouth shadows.

The duration of this play covers the entire reign of Saul. The time is shortened, to meet the artistic requirements of the story, to twenty years. The length of the period is unusual, but not unfitting, for time adds to the tragedy of the drama. In the first act Saul refuses to be king unless Loruhamah, the young woman he loves, is made queen. But she is not an Israelite, though willing to become one, and the High Priest rules against all who are not born of Israel, for the royal station. Loruhamah, careful of the highest interests of the man she loves, refuses to allow him to lose the throne for her sake, though he pleads with her to go with him to Babylon that they may be happy there together. She takes the whole matter out of his hands, disappears, and is no more seen by Saul throughout the twenty years.

Saul is now induced to marry Ahinoam, a beautiful maiden whose heart is tender towards Loruhamah. This part of the drama shows Saul as an independent spirit of stormy energy, fitted to be what he probably was, a great

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and good ruler. Though unseen, Loruhamah now constitutes herself Saul's guardian angel, a function she maintains to the end.

In the second act, Doeg the Edomite, who has ingratiated himself with Saul, schemes to destroy the king. In this plot, he craves the assistance of Loruhamah, as priestess of Ashtoreth, hoping she may be induced to share his nefarious treachery. It is his intention that she shall lure Saul away from Jehovah and the religion of Israel, to his own undoing, so that Edom may conquer the nation and annex it to the Edomite power. The young woman, firm in her loyalty to Saul, spurns the project, and the second act closes with her lofty defiance in one of the most powerful scenes in the drama.

The aged prophet Samuel enters the play in the third act. Stern, resolute, vindictive for Jehovah, he curses Saul in the presence of Ahinoam, the Queen, for having spared the cattle of Agag for sacrifice instead of destroying them, as Samuel had commanded in the name of Jehovah. The Queen, prostrated by the severity of Samuel against Saul, which seems to her cruel and unjust, dies suddenly in her husband's arms.

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All the while, concealed in the wood at the left, Loruhamah has been watching these events. She sees the king ascending the steps and entering the palace with Ahinoam dead in his arms. As soon as he disappears within the portal she exclaims:

“O gods above the woe of all the world!
O presences immovable and vast!
Let loose the lightnings of your wrath on me
And spare him stricken to the uttermost!”

The silent night and the stars are revealed, while the silver reflection of the moonlight is seen on Loruhamah’s face.

David is the centre of the next act. He is accused by Doeg of conniving for the throne. Since Samuel has already anointed him to be king, David cannot successfully defend himself. He flees from Saul’s hurtling javelin, and escaping with Jonathan, passes out of the drama, estranged not only from Saul, but from Michal who, torn with dread of all that may befall her father, her brother, her husband, for the time sees David no more, but remains with her father the King.

Bereft of the guiding word of the prophets—both Samuel and the High Priest being now dead—deprived of the soothing influence of

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David's harp, and stricken by Jehovah, the lonely King goes in his extremity to the cave of Endor, where, as he has learned, there is one who, notwithstanding his edict, has the power, and may be induced, to raise Samuel for his counselling. Here in the cave of Endor the fifth act is staged, and here the Witch enters the drama.

Had it been possible to cover the fact that she is none other than Loruhamah, no doubt our poet would have availed himself of this piece of mystery, but the secret would have been guessed and verified from the beginning, so there is no effort made to help the plot in this way. Is it the thought of the imposing figure of Saul in the cave, his giant height overtopping all others, that leads our author to use as his foregleam to the tragedy, Browning's picture of Saul in the tent?

"At the first I saw naught but the blackness—
 the vast, the upright
Main prop which sustains the pavilion: and
 slow into sight
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest
 of all.
Then a sunbeam that burst through the tent-
 roof showed Saul."

A small fire in a brazier within the cave is the only light. It is not yet daybreak. In the

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dimness Saul does not recognize the Witch. Samuel's wraith appears and announces Saul's immediate death. Exhausted and stricken, the King falls fainting to the ground. Doeg steals into the cave and demands that Loruhamah shall slay Saul. She feigns willingness, receives the dagger from Doeg's hand, strikes suddenly at Doeg's throat, misses aim, is foiled. Doeg himself is about to slay Saul when Abner arrives, engages with Doeg and slays him. Saul revives. Abner explains the situation as to the dead body, then returns to the army without. Saul recognizes Loruhamah, who now begs of him to go with her to Babylon, as he, twenty years before, had besought her to go with him.

The closing scene is made strong and beautiful by the noble reserve of Saul and by the deep intensity of Loruhamah's emotion. The final strophes are satisfying to the artistic taste. But apart altogether from the love-story of the King and this priestess of Ashtor-eth, many obscure details in the life of Saul are cleared up by Norwood's arrangement, as contrasted with the disjointed story as it appears in the book of Samuel. It seems likely also that a very just service is rendered to the

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memory of one who, because he was more universal—perhaps we should say elemental—than tribal, was a victim of narrow racial pride and religious prejudice. It may be, indeed, that Saul was a really great ruler who belonged in his development to a later age and a larger arena.

“*The Witch of Endor*” has never been staged. It would require at least four artists of supreme dramatic power in the cast. Whatever may be said, however, of its suitability for presentation upon the stage in this modern day, it inspires the finest aspirations of the soul and is an achievement in Canadian letters. It is probably the most distinguished work that Norwood has yet published.

“*The Witch of Endor*” gives the world a new Saul. To a wholesome mind, it is always a joy to see any well-known personage lifted to a higher ethical level in the world’s esteem. Norwood does this with most of his dramatic people. The Witch, Saul, Judas, Bartimæus, and others rise in our estimation with Norwood’s treatment. When he pictures a villain, he first creates him. Doeg has no place in the world’s esteem from which he could be

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dragged to suffer the ignominy of playing a base part in a mean plot.

We should not leave this play without some allusion to another Canadian drama. "Saul," by Heavysege, is worthy of wider recognition, but it belongs to an age that is past. It was suited to fireside study when first published sixty-five years ago. Norwood's drama is distinctly modern. The "Saul" published by Heavysege in 1857 is as different from the Saul of "The Witch of Endor," published in 1916, as are the following lines put into their mouths by their respective creators:

Heavysege's Saul:

"To hunt and to be hunted make existence."

Norwood's Saul:

"Set the strong shaft of purpose to the cord
And send it singing to the mark."

It must be admitted that poetry suited to stage production is lonely in Canada. Drama is a task for genius. Few writers are fitted for the work. Some great poets have tried it with little success. Few Canadians who have ventured into this field have met with appreciation. The significant Canadian

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dramatists are a small group indeed, Heavysege, Mair, Campbell, Stringer, Norwood, and Denison. Of the dramas written in Canada there is probably none with more lines of strength, beauty, and surprise, than are found in either "The Witch of Endor" or "The Man of Kerioth." This is high praise, for the others—"Saul," "Tecumseh," "Mordred," "Sappho"—are strong and memorable tragedies.

There is little doubt that "The Witch" will sooner or later appear on the screen. It is admirably adapted for such presentation. Indeed, Norwood has recently produced a scenario entitled "The Power Within," which has appeared with approval in American cities. It is a modernized story of Job, intended to show that a man should be the captain of his own soul.

"The Piper and the Reed" appeared in 1917. In the title poem of this book, Norwood shows how precious is a poet in the sight of God. He tells how the Heavenly Piper found a reed and added its note to the music, in order to perfect the harmony that He loves. As we read the poem we think again of that memorable day when God sought the young

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minstrel in the clearance of the forest, and brought him to realize “the beauty of holiness and the holiness of beauty.” We are reminded also of the call of young Isaiah. (Isaiah vi.)

The finest work in the volume, next to the title poem, is probably “After the Order of Melchizedek.” Three stanzas of this poem are already well known, for they have been frequently and widely quoted. They are the three beginning:

“I have no temple and no creed.”

The “Melchizedek” is presented entire in this volume. It has a freshness and a freedom attractive to those who have burst the cocoons of cult and prejudice. No one knows better than Norwood that every thinker has some sort of creed; but here is a counterblast against fixity and aggressiveness of belief.

Much of Norwood’s thought and feeling are embodied in “The Optimist,” “A Song of New Gods,” “The King of Glory,” and “The Ploughman.” The last of these particularly, though a brief poem, has a dignity and nobility most attractive. Norwood has said elsewhere:

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“Everybody is divine. All divine being is germinal in the ego, and life eternal is the unfoldment of God in that ego. The Selfhood of God is in an eternal unfoldment . . . All is present. All is God. Time is but the shadow of divine consciousness obscured occasionally by the realization of the germinal processes of the soul. To take no thought for the morrow is to have arrived at the margin where, in the light of full divine consciousness, time shadows disappear.” The poems in this volume are true to the ethics of the intellect, and also to the loyalties of the heart, both of which qualities are timely.

In his next book, “*The Modernists*,” published in 1918, Norwood traces the development of the higher consciousness from the times of greater Egypt down to our own. It is dedicated to Charles G. D. Roberts, with whom Norwood has kept in touch ever since his days at King’s. This volume reveals an appreciation of the ideals of his heroes, implying an intimate acquaintance with the characters and times of these men and women. The fact that he is not a mere chronicler, but a poet, warrants the wide, imaginative sweep of his monologues. It may be that in some

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cases the poet has revealed more of the meaning of these strategic souls than they themselves had realized. This, of course, is not true of the greatest of them, such as Moses and Socrates. These men knew more than they could tell to their contemporaries. Their audiences lacked capacity and vision. One full monologue—"Giordano Bruno," appears in the anthology of this volume. Lines from a few others are presented here. The reader will perceive the beauty and wisdom embodied in each quotation.

Akhenaton: "This star is but
A field on which our spirit hands let fall
Seed for the growing of eternal flowers
Lulled by a host of crooning centuries."

Moses:
"God is the joy of craftsmen in their craft:
The sculptor's tender touching of the stone
That takes the form and substance of his dream;
Persistence of the chisel and the plane,
Fidelity of broadaxe to the line."

Socrates:
"I drink to all good friends:
Wayfarers of the world who bravely seek
After the truth And those
Who dare untrodden roads for no reward
Save joy of finding out another path
For clodded feet that falter on old ways
Leading no whither."

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Mary:

“Teach every woman how Maid Mary’s Son
Is God’s oath that no mother bears in vain;
That every pang of childbirth is the price
Paid for the coming of a starry Christ;
There are no cadences of smitten harps
Kept back from any little babe at birth.”

Dante:

“The soul is an immortal instrument
Played by the Master-Christ on many chords;
Yea, every human soul hath its own Christ—
The Beatrice of celestial dream.”

Paul:

“Let fall
Distinctions from henceforth, and keep in one
The diverse aspirations of mankind.
Force is of Satan; Art the child of God;
And they who, like this foredoomed Babylon,
Build citadels cemented by men’s blood,
Are numbered with the damned!”

This last selection is taken from “His Lady of the Sonnets,” for though this poem is reprinted in “The Modernists,” the form is there slightly changed. Norwood makes it clear that evil never was, and never will be, destroyed by force. Conflict by its very nature breeds more conflict. Therefore he makes Paul say we must cast away all separating prejudices and bigot-superiorities. Only spiritual energy can overcome evils, whether on the physical or the spiritual planes.

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One more book, making five in all, emerged from Norwood's study in annual series. Our author had meantime moved to Philadelphia. This book, "The Man of Kerioth," appeared in 1919. It had been in contemplation for some years and presents a new, or at least a fresh, conception of the beginnings of the Christian ideal, before the doctors of theology had given it the dogmatic twists that pertain to our ecclesiastical "Christianity." It gives us a picture of Christian backgrounds while the hope was still alive in the Judean Christian's heart that the new Leader might prove to be a rock on which the Roman Empire would soon be broken.

This drama sets forth a Messiah whose miracles are spiritual achievements more miraculous—that is, more wonderful—than any physical exploits, however notable. It presents a Christ whose sublime personality was in itself the highest miracle. To each of the other characters some deft touch is given by the sculptor's fingers. Philip becomes a Greek minstrel; Caiaphas, a social lion whose loyalties to Israel do not turn him aside from the gaieties of an elite social confraternity.

Mary Magdalene is a woman also loyal to

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Israel, but a lover of Judas who would inspire him to Messianic aspirations and deeds; Bartimæus, a blind minstrel, mystic, and poet whose heavenly vision gives the tragedy, for some readers, its greatest charm; the man of Kerioth, Judas, a thunderer of Hebrew fanaticism, a warrior-hearted enemy of Rome who is constantly pestering Jesus for "a sign;" and—the Carpenter—ah! *the Carpenter!*

The conception of every character is distinctly a poet's. Possibly the drama would be less disturbing to preconceptions of the present times if the Carpenter had been kept in the background, but our author is not one who asks himself timidly whether the whole truth should be spoken. Here is Judas' story of how he first met Jesus: (Act I—page 46.)

"Dreaming, I looked up, and lo! a lad
Like to myself in years, but very tall
And comely, called across a barley field:
'David and Jonathan once walked this way.'

Halting my horse, I answered swift to him:
'Hail, Daniel! Thou hast read aright my dream.'

And he: 'Nay, there was that upon your face
Which told the secret; and I also dream.'

'Then is the love of those immortal friends
Blended again in us,' I cried; 'for he
Who reads my heart already has my heart!'

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'Have I your heart?' he challenged. 'Yea,
you have,'

I answered, leaping from my horse to meet
His hand across the hedge of blossomed
thorn."

In the second act the Carpenter appears at the Jordan, where John, with herald voice, is booming across the plain: "Behold the Lamb of God."

The third act tells in detail the story of the wedding at Cana. If any reader feels that the drama suffers because its author holds it far above the maze of miracle, the answer is that Jesus himself refused a sign to his own evil generation. The people were ever more disposed to believe in magic than in the miracle of truth. As another of our Canadian poets (Wilson MacDonald) writes:

"If all the miracle deeds of Christ
Had proven birth in a womb of lies,
My spirit would still with Him keep tryst
With faith as deep as the sun-washed skies."

One of Norwood's somewhat radical correspondents once wrote him: "I have decided not only to rock the boat, but to upset it, so that everybody will have to swim ashore, for we shall never get ashore any other way."

Referring to this, Norwood says: "The one place where ferment is most needed is

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in the sphere of religion. Iconoclasm there, is more needed than anything constructive, for one cannot do much building while an impossible idea of the universe still exists in people's minds. Challenge and shatter is the immediate programme, and out of the chaos we will build a new religious consciousness . . . Other aspects of God await us on other planes, but here we must not worship a dehumanized Christ."

In "*The Man of Kerioth*" Jesus is represented as stirring the imagination of the children He is entertaining, to see the bird, which he has ideally created, flying in the air above them. Thomas cannot see the bird; nor Judas; but the children can, and Jesus says, in effect: "The real miracle is that which fills the sky with wings, and they only are in the kingdom who can so lift earth to heaven."

The soul with profound vision knows it is easier to hurl Hermon's peak into the Mediterranean, than to add one saying to the immortal message of Jesus. If our poet, then, has side-stepped the mist of miracle with which so many befog their reason and call the process faith, it is the theologian and not the artist who will

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complain. None knows better than Robert Norwood that in the conflict between physical forces and spiritual energies, the latter are always prevalent and paramount. What we call physical forces *are* in reality spiritual energies acting in their lower or objective phase.

But Judas, the man of Kerioth, is disappointed that Jesus will not work a sign. The whole of the third act and most of the fourth is devoted to a study of the higher miracle of spiritual vision and great character. The fifth presents the final and catastrophic adventure of Judas wherein he tries to force Jesus to work a sign so vast and wonderful that all the world would believe him to be the Messiah.

The drama puts Judas in a better light than he generally enjoys in the thought of the Christian world. It may be that the chief value of this book is the wonder and joy which clothe the Carpenter in every mood and crisis of his tragic career. It is certainly a challenge insistently asking whether a magical mastery of phenomena suffices for a proof of divinity, or whether the power of personality alone brings a perennial joy

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and eternal peace. As Rev. Dr. Robert Johnston of Philadelphia says in his able introduction to this drama: "The Mystic knows Jesus as the Friend, very close and very dear. It is love that has led him captive, not wonder or power." Dostoevsky says, "Faith does not, in the realist, spring from the miracle, but the miracle from the faith." (*The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 21.)

In this drama, Bartimæus is the most winsome and delightful of the characters, the Carpenter alone excepted. Indeed, had some of Bartimæus' beauty been ascribed to the Carpenter, the conventional believer would have been much better pleased. Bartimæus, Mary of Magdala, the Carpenter—any of these may be regarded as more interesting than Judas. If this be a fault, it comes of a genius too prolific, that fails to focus in one character.

When Norwood removed to Overbrook, West Philadelphia, the cares of his new parish absorbed him so fully that two years elapsed before another volume appeared. "Bill Boram" is a ballad of the sea. It is characteristically inscribed "To My Dear Friend, Skipper Bill, whose transfiguration led me to this

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poem." Bill Boram is the central figure and holds the chief interest throughout. No doubt, like so many literary heroes, Bill is a composite character representing more than one nautical acquaintance of the poet.

"In stature Bill was short and thick. His face
Was not unlike old Aaron Conrad's bull—
The ugliest and the meanest brute I know—
A tangle of red hair above two eyes
Like balls of polished bronze that seemed to
glow
With hot hell fire. Bill's tongue was very
wise
In all the art of antique blasphemy."

The theme of this tale of the sea is the regenerative power of clean, eternal beauty. On the surface it is a lurid, rough-neck story. Looking deeper, the reader will find the epic of a soul. He will see God climbing up out of the beast in man to the blue Olympus. We quote a few lines, in the anthology contained in this volume, from the closing page of the story, and these, together with those already quoted from the first page, will give some indication of the storm of verbal energy contained in the book, details of which are supplied from Norwood's experience and vision. The dreams of his boyhood, when he saw the white sails disappear around the headland and go out

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into the great reality, have come true; but the reality is not exactly a voyage of the Argonauts in quest of the golden fleece. Nevertheless, the picture is vividly true to life and is, as Grace Blackburn, in a foreword of unusual interest, expresses it, a "rush of tidal waters, and a welter of elemental human passions."

We trust that the platform and screen will never divert Norwood from the field of poetry. This hope is not based upon any low estimate of his power to do other work well, but rather upon the fact that poetry is of supreme importance, and that Robert Norwood is a poet in a paramount sense. No one has an unlimited supply of physical energy. Is not the poet well advised, therefore, if he refuse to engage in any effort that could hinder in the least degree the whispers of the inspiring muse? Many of Norwood's admirers are hopeful that he will, in further volumes of distinctive verse, rise to even greater heights.

Norwood has always emphasized his message more than the form in which he clothes it. The real beauty of a poem is revealed in the fact that it contains a significant truth clothed in a form which makes that truth—not the form—seem glorious. No Canadian poet excels

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Robert Norwood in the importance of his message. His vision is clear and his forms transparent. He knows that new mirrors are needed to reflect new conceptions of truth. The importance of new phrase and form, constituting to some extent a new technique, is not generally sufficiently realized. Few poets have gone as far as Norwood in the use of newer modes of expression, with so little violation of the canons of eternal truth and beauty.

Norwood is never oblivious to the higher purposes of his art. He recognizes his responsibility to create ideals and set them forth as spiritual standards of the age. This quality alone would set him apart from many others of his time and land, but his work is still further distinguished, like that of only two or three others of his countrymen, by the fact that the standards he proposes do not proceed from the slaveries and confusions of the past. He requires that the soul shall be true in a higher sense than that it merely does not tell lies; that it shall be active in more than its own personal interests. His ideal demands no laborious attention to those fashions of society and forms of religion whose chief end is the attainment of an eminent respectability.

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His spirit breathes the higher atmospheres in concourse with great souls in the free altitudes of thought.

Norwood repudiates all barriers set up by the conservators of the past to limit the progress of the pioneer, or to discourage the adventure of the explorer into new realms of human experience. "The Voice of the Twentieth Century," speaking through Norwood, says:

"Challenge the right of every tyrant's token;
The fist of mail; the sceptre; ancient, oaken
Coffers of gold for which thy sons are slain:
The pride of place, which from the days of Cain
Hath for the empty right of Power spoken!
Be like a trumpet blown from clouds of doom."

Norwood feels that his citizenship in the Universe is a thing of beauty and of bliss. This sentiment is spreading as by divine contagion, while the official blunderers—ordained and elected persons whose creed and office is their only superiority—stumble on, ruling our institutions and vainly imagining they are ruling the world. Art and science are the everlasting enemies of conservatism. It is they and not time that "makes ancient good uncouth."

There is no art without inspiration, and in-

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spiration is of necessity evolutionary; therefore, if one would speak accurately, there are no conservative poets. Great, smiting truth, moving with its eternal stride, is always art.

Realizing that his own consciousness is often merged into the music of the All-Conscious, Norwood is on good terms with the Universal Mind, and does not think it bad form to mention God. He regards Man as a ripple of the Sea of Soul, making its own softly-whispering music on the shores of time. He sees the surf of experience, adventurous, eerie, musical, returning to the arms of the Sea to be one with the Heart of All, yet retaining, through all its moods, its own essential qualities and characteristics.

Such a poet is not of the past, no matter to what time his theme refers. He touches the past and it becomes present. His thought is contemporaneous with all time, marching *pari passu* with the evolving thought of Man. To him, for this reason, waiting is winning, and delay is but a longer path to a fuller acceptance of his word.

Till that master come who shall do for North America what Wycliffe and Chaucer did for England, what Dante did for Italy, and

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Luther for Germany, we Saxons should welcome every writer who helps to hold the speech of the people, as nearly as possible, loyal to its Aryan foundations. Since only the scholar can realize the deep significance of words, and the necessity that speech should be accurate and perspicuous, the onus of maintaining the purity of our tongue is upon him, and woe be to that author in any field who regards the responsibility lightly.

If the reader ask what poets have most influenced Norwood's work, I should say that perhaps Browning and Whitman have had as much of his thought-concurrence as any others. No doubt his style has been moulded somewhat after those of Shelley and Keats. This would come partly through his intimate relation with Charles G. D. Roberts. But it is impossible to conceive that an artist as creative and dominant as Norwood could imitate any other poet. It has been said that "The Piper and the Reed" shows more than a passing acquaintance with Mrs. Browning's "A Musical Instrument." All it shows in this relation is that both poets were familiar with the fact that a flute-like tube could be cut out of a hollow reed, and that both understood the art, as

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Mrs. Browning phrases it, of "Making a poet out of a man." Norwood's is the most sparklingly brilliant mind that it has been my privilege to know. Why should such a man, because a theme has been treated before, abstain from treating it again?

If such a canon were enforced, Boccaccio would have barred many a genius from his fame. Shakespeare would not have been quite Shakespeare. Lessing could not have written his wonderful passage in "Nathan the Wise," and we should have been poorer by the subtraction from our classics of Goethe's "Faust." Great art is a suggestion of a new and fuller life based on a glorious reminiscence. Such is the benign function of a classic. It is a perennially-inspiring challenge to the ages to take it and make its beauty more beautiful. Discussing, some years ago, the literary influence of the earlier poets, Norwood said: "Is not God reminiscent of Himself? Man is but the fuller music of that olden song of the morning stars. Why should we not be Whitmanesque? Why not reminiscent of Wordsworth and Browning? Did they not catch their music from the cadences of ancient harps?" Robert Norwood

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is familiar with every great poet who has used the English tongue. He knows a few profoundly. He has been influenced by many; he has imitated none.

When Norwood came into the Canadian choir, the war was already in progress. He regarded it as the inevitable break-up of an age of selfishness, the inescapable result of failure to practise the Golden Rule, to obey which he feels is the secret of civilization. Since 1914, when the war began, his poetry has issued like a flood, yet it would be difficult to find in it all a score of consecutive lines bearing directly upon the war. In "A Song of Battles" he says:

"Gold is the cause of war...
War is the price we pay for gold—
Gold for which we give God."

It is never difficult to know what Norwood thinks on any vital subject. He has all the courage that any man needs even in *this* world. He is of the new era of thought, though rather more conservative in form and style than the average poet on this continent. This last is owing probably to his love of beauty.

A word here will not be amiss in reference to "Driftwood," the small collection of verse

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published privately by Norwood and his room-mate, Charles Vernon, at King's. The little volume contains fifteen poems, and eight of these are by Norwood. They show lines of beauty and promise, as for example:

“The wild gulls circling sweep and cry;
A thin mist veils the crimson west.”

The poem which gave rise to C. G. D. Roberts' observations at King's is entitled “Memory.” After carefully reading this poem and the others contained in “Driftwood” the conviction grows that Professor Roberts based his judgment not so much on the quality of the poem as upon his vision of the innate powers of the young minstrel, knowing he would sing when the angel muse had stirred the healing waters of his soul. “Driftwood” is to be seen in the Logan collection of *Canadiana* in Acadia University.

An eighth volume of verse by Robert Norwood is now almost ready for the press. One of the poems is “Clotho.” The reader of this thing of wonder will not encounter here the grim Hellenic terror of the first fate, but will find the usual softening effect of Norwood's chisel. The sardonic features are trans-

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formed, revealing a face where smiles and tears alternate, suffusing it with the splendour of benignity and peace.

Affectionate and playful, even with his peers, Dr. Norwood can be, at the appropriate moment, as serious as the fates. He never side-tracks happiness, but through it all is seen his deep philosophy of life. In his view, we are flames of the ever-renascent fire. In the very fact that we are spiritually alive, we have achieved eternity. Why then should we postpone heaven? Though reality be frozen stiff in physical matter, it is arrested there—framed in the fixed impermanence of time—that we may perceive its essence; and all the while, upon the shores of sense, white sails appear and golden prows, the swift outriders of the Spirit. We are the children of the Universe, not merely in as much as we proceed from it, but because we are the thought and desire of the All-Conscious Life. Our creative imagination is not only the instrument of the eternal Thought and Will; we are a part of it as our thought and feeling are a part of us. We can, therefore, within the limits of universal Law, create what we will and establish its being in the realm of reality,

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after which it necessarily takes form sooner or later in the arena of the actual.

We wait expectantly for the dawning of a day when all Canadians, a people born of progenitors from many lands, shall breathe the distinctive poetic atmosphere of this new country and this new age. The day is here when poets come singing to us of hope and courage and great comradeship. All are longing for the time when racial and religious bigotry and political prejudice shall have passed away, when personal selfishness shall be only a memory, and world-communion a sacred reality triumphant over all narrow loyalties with their bulldog boasts of the former days.

In the evolution of such a commonwealth, we shall never cease to emulate those great souls, the heroes of every land, who lusted their contemporaries with the glory of their own herculean labours. Least of all shall we forget those bright luminaries of the Anglo-Saxon noon, who with ardent aspiration and tireless endeavour, met world-staggering problems and tremendous tasks, and solved and performed them with a wisdom and a courage which only profane partisans ignore.

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We look forward to a time when we of these western lands, healed of all our divisions by the only possible remedy, shall summon to our souls those rarest of all human qualities, equanimity and magnanimity, and shall proceed in the spirit which Shelley set forth in his last stanza of "Prometheus Unbound:"

"To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy power which seems omnipotent;
To love and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone, Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory."

This is not the place nor the time to tell all that the poet sees. Enough that the stupendous hour, whose approach Shelley perceived a century ago, is arrived; and those who have the vision are challenged to release their powers as Norwood has said,

"In plans of magnitude
So vast, a god's white, awful arm might shake,
Fulfilling them!"

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